Unpaid work questions on the Census

During the conduct of the 2001 Census, in response to community representations, the Government asked the Australian Bureau of Statistics to consider including unpaid work questions in the 2006 Census.

The ABS had previously not included such questions in the Census as it believes the most reliable and comprehensive data on unpaid work is obtained through its Time Use Survey. This survey is being conducted this year, and gives a very detailed breakdown of how people use their time, including in unpaid and volunteer work.

However the survey does not cover small areas like the Census, and ABS identified it would be beneficial to obtain data from the Census which would complement the existing survey.

After working with key stakeholders to identify data needs, including the Women's Action Alliance, the ABS sought extra funding to include questions on unpaid work in the Census.

Four question have been added to the Census form to cover unpaid work concepts, and apply to all persons aged 15 years or older. The questions include:

- Time spent on unpaid domestic duties for their household.
- Unpaid care of people due to a disability, a long-term illness or problems related to old age.
- Unpaid care of their own or other peoples children.
- Unpaid voluntary work through an organisation or group.

These questions will assist in understanding the contribution of unpaid work to Australian society. This will help in the planning of local facilities, services such as day care and occasional care, and in the provision of information and support to carers, by identifying where these services are needed.

They will also help increase understanding of the way Australian individuals and families balance their paid work and other important aspects of their lives, such as family and community commitments.

And they will also add to information about the amount of unpaid work people do, including

domestic activities, helping family, friends or neighbours and volunteering, that will be available through the Time Use Survey.

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